

November 11th, 2015

ATTENTION:

Jordan Jackson, Student Representative & Anthony Young, PIBC Representative,
Canadian Institute of Planners - L'Institut canadien des urbanistes

RE: Student Member Concern over the Canadian Association of Planning Students (CAPS-ACEAU)

We are writing you in our capacity as presidents, representatives, and concerned students from five university planning programmes — Dalhousie University, Ryerson University, the University of British Columbia, the University of Manitoba, and Vancouver Island University — to inform you of ongoing issues with the Canadian Association of Planning Students (CAPS-ACÉAU).

In early 2015, the University of British Columbia and Dalhousie University made the decision to apply to host the 2016 CAPS-ACÉAU conference. Each school put together a strong bid and submitted it to the CAPS-ACÉAU long-term officers for consideration. After a two-month turnaround period, CAPS-ACÉAU responded to us and said that both schools were "tied" in the points assigned to their bid. Both schools were asked to review and significantly alter their bid within one week and return it to the long-term officers for a second consideration.

While this process is perfectly reasonable, interactions with the CAPS-ACÉAU long-term officers, were generally unclear and often patronising. When speaking with the Chief Long-Term officer about the organisation's by-laws and governing practices, committee members were told that these were for internal purposes only and that they could not view them unless at an AGM. Requests for past AGM minutes were also turned down.

Subsequently, the organising committees of both UBC and Dalhousie became anxious about the scope of the changes that they were being asked to make to their respective bids, as many of these changes were contrary to the spirit of what each school was trying to organise. UBC first made the decision, after significant deliberation, to withdraw their bid at this point. They wrote a letter (Attachment 1) and received a cursory response that followed four days after (Attachment 2).

At this time, UBC also contacted Dalhousie University, and informed them of their decision to withdraw. In conversations between them, both schools came to learn that they shared similar concerns, particularly around the unreasonable costs that the Long-term Officers were demanding for a student conference. Dalhousie also noted that while the CAPS-ACÉAU by-laws require a minimum of 4 Long-Term Board members to govern the organization only two long-term officers currently run the organization, and that it was (and remains) not clear when the last CAPS-ACÉAU election was held. After discussing things further Dalhousie also decided to withdraw their bid (Attachment 3) at the same time citing concerns over the lack of transparency around the Long-Term Officers, the CAPS-ACÉAU by-laws and elections.

Following the withdrawals of both potential host schools (the only two that had applied, it should be added), a series of exchanges began between Dalhousie, UBC, and individuals from several other institutions. Concerns over a lack a transparency grew in intensity and a decision was made to submit these to the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) and Association of Canadian Urban Planning Programs (ACUPP) Boards for their consideration (Attachments 4 and 5). The issue was brought to the 2015 CIP Conference in Saskatoon, but because of the subsequent restructuring of CIP, the issue was not discussed there to our knowledge. Since then, conversations have continued amongst directors of planning schools in ACUPP, who have also expressed confusion and concern over CAPS-ACÉAU behaviour.

CAPS-ACÉAU has most recently come forward with a 2016 conference, to be held in Banff. The conference is not sponsored by any planning students or schools, and will charge the highest conference rates yet seen by students. These changes have motivated a collection of concerned students to take further steps towards clarifying the role of and representation of students in CAPS-ACÉAU. A letter was sent to CAPS-ACÉAU (Attachment 6) on October 30th, 2015 that questioned the transparency and clarity of the organization through several specific questions and requests for information. **As of November 11th, 2015, no response has been received from the Long Term Officers or any of the organization's other representatives.** Further, CAPS-ACÉAU has removed any mention of student representation on their website and with the conference itself. In August of 2015, information regarding the conference had originally stated:

*"The CAPS-ACÉAU conference is a three day event **planned by students and intended for students.** The conference moves to a different planning school in Canada each year **bringing together students, professors and professionals** to network, collaborate and share research on various planning topics."*

This exists in stark contrast to how such information appears today in preparation of 2016's conference. As of writing this letter, the CAPS-ACÉAU website states:

*"The CAPS-ACÉAU conference is a three day event **planned by volunteers and focusing on professional development for delegates.** The conference moves to a different city in Canada each year **bringing together delegates, professors and professionals** to network, collaborate and share research on various planning topics."*

As a student-run organization for over thirty years, student involvement is a hallmark of CAPS-ACÉAU. We are fortunate to have an annual platform for students to volunteer their time, gain valuable experience, share ideas, and network with other peers, professionals, and practitioners from across the country. It is our concern that student involvement and representation is no longer present within the CAPS-ACÉAU structure.

As an immediate form of action, Dalhousie's Faculty of Architecture and Planning will not be advertising the conference this year or funding students to go to the conference. The Department of City Planning at the University of Manitoba will also not be advertising the conference this year or funding students to attend. The University of British Columbia School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) has no plans to fund students to attend the Banff conference and also plans on making a statement to encourage other schools and PTIAs to do the same. Ryerson University students, both graduate and undergraduate, have also spoken about these issues will not be promoting the conference and both student associations intend to encourage other nearby schools not to attend, as well.

We are writing this letter to inform you of our concerns over the organization of CAPS-ACÉAU and to ask for you to take action to address the issues identified here. We ask that you do any, and ideally all, of the following:

- (1) Publicly withdraw support for students towards the 2016 Banff Conference until clarification and further transparency from the organization is received;
- (2) Demand CAPS-ACÉAU to respond to member concerns and requests (i.e., opening financials for review and releasing their by-laws);
- (3) Demand the current CAPS-ACÉAU long-term officers resign due to their breach of current by-laws and replace them with a transitional board in the mean-time.

We thank you for your awareness on this issue and look forward to discussing this with you and our other planning colleagues from across Canada now and in the future.

Best,

Planning Students Association (PSA), School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP), University of British Columbia

Graduate Planning Society, School of Planning, Dalhousie University

University of Manitoba Association of Planning Students (UMAPS), Department of City Planning, University of Manitoba

Ryerson Association of Planning Students (RAPS), Ryerson Planning Graduate Student Association (RPGSA)
School of Urban and Regional Planning, Ryerson University

Vancouver Island University Planning Students, Vancouver Island University